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ABSTRACT

Offering guidance on diagnostic and developmental techniques, this teacher's guide helps teachers to assess pupils' understanding and day-to-day progress in writing and to identify appropriate next steps to help pupils make progress. The teacher's guide examines the process of writing, offering guidance on classroom activities relating to preparing for writing, drafting and redrafting, and preparing to publish. After an introduction, sections of the teacher's guide discuss taking a closer look at learning to write (including involving pupils, when to intervene, and qualities in writing), diagnostic procedures in writing (including obtaining evidence, focusing on growth points, and acting on evidence), and areas for exploration (including preparing for writing, drafting and redrafting, and preparing to publish). (RS)

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE

ED 381 807

TAKING *a closer look* at WRITING

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English Language
Diagnostic Procedures

Taking a Closer Look at Writing

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The series consists of sets of publications for English language, maths, and science.

Introductory booklet.

- *Key Ideas in Diagnostic Assessment: An Introduction to the Taking a Closer Look Series.* Revised edition (1995).

English Language. A package containing –

- *Taking a Closer Look at Reading* (1995). Teacher's guide.
- *Taking a Closer Look at Writing* (1995). Teacher's guide.
- The introductory booklet *Key Ideas.*

Mathematics.

Set 1: A package containing –

- *Taking a Closer Look at Shape, Position and Movement/Problem Solving: Space, Fact and Fiction* (1993). Pupil worksheets and teacher's notes and teacher's guide.
- The introductory booklet *Key Ideas.*

Set 2: A package containing –

- *Taking a Closer Look at Shape, Position and Movement/Problem Solving: Around Town* (1993). Pupil worksheets and teacher's notes.

Set 3: A package containing –

- *Taking a Closer Look at Number* (1995). Teacher's guide.
- *Taking a Closer Look at Information Handling* (1995). Teacher's guide.
- The introductory booklet *Key Ideas.*

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- *Taking a Closer Look at Science* (1995). Teacher's guide.
- The introductory booklet *Key Ideas.*

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The main authors of the packages are: John Hall and Louise Hayward (English Language); Manon Devine and Myra Pearson (Mathematics); Wynne Harlen, Iain Smithers and Carole Thomson (Science).

The project was directed by Harry Black, depute director of SCRE. Harry's thoughtful leadership and stimulating criticism contributed immeasurably to the project. His sudden death in June 1994 shocked us all. He will be greatly missed.

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1 Introduction

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT WRITING

This is one of two resources which will help teachers with the day-to-day assessment of English Language within the context of English Language 5-14. An accompanying guide on *Reading* forms part of the package of materials.

The guides are intended to follow on from the short booklet *Key Ideas in Diagnostic Assessment* which introduces the series (also in the pack). This booklet explains the general principles of using assessment to help learning and outlines the range of materials and approaches used in the diagnostic procedures series.

These publications are intended to assist schools in the development of 5-14 assessment policies and procedures and to help individual classroom teachers with the assessment of learning in a way which fits in with their normal teaching.

THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT

The material presented draws heavily upon a wide range of existing research and practice, much of which will already be familiar to teachers, and applies it in the context of Education 5-14. It aims to clarify and illustrate what is meant by a 'diagnostic procedure' and to help teachers to explore pupils' thinking as they work, and thus to guide learning more effectively.

In developing the materials, the project team worked alongside teachers in schools throughout the country to map out what 'taking a closer look' might mean in classrooms where the 5-14 curriculum is being implemented. In doing this, every attempt was made to think of assessment as a broad-based procedure integral with teaching and learning.

Most of the suggestions in this guide are applicable both in primary and secondary school contexts. However, the differences in organisation of primary and secondary classes mean that teachers will sometimes have to interpret the materials to suit their own situations. Class size is an obvious case in point. The organisation of the school day is a further factor — the length of the average class period in secondary schools will influence what can be done and careful planning will be required to ensure that individual attention can be given to all pupils over time.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide looks at the process of writing from the initial formulation of an idea, through drafting, revising, editing and on to eventual publication.

Chapter 2 (Taking a closer look at learning to write) highlights the ideas which underline the teaching and assessment of writing.

Chapter 3 (Diagnostic procedures in writing) is concerned with what is involved in taking a closer look at pupils' writing and suggests ways in which evidence can be gathered and acted upon.

Chapter 4 (Areas for Exploration) presents strategies which teachers can use to promote successful writing, looking in detail at those stages preparing for writing, drafting and redrafting, and preparing to publish.

Reference is made in the text to the following publications relating to the Education 5–14 programme:

Scottish Office Education Department (1991) *Assessment 5–14. Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland. National Guidelines.* Scottish Office Education Department.

Scottish Office Education Department (1991) *English Language 5–14. Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland. National Guidelines.* Scottish Office Education Department.

2 *Taking a closer look at learning to write*

Diagnostic assessment is an aspect of assessment as part of teaching. Its aim is to take a closer look at pupils' learning – to see how they are dealing with what they are doing, and to examine strengths and needs in relation to particular tasks or learning targets. It explores individual pupils' thinking and reactions to the task, so that the teacher can help them to work from where they are as learners. Diagnostic assessment is thus a means by which the teacher can find evidence relating to the four key questions for 'assessment as part of teaching' set out in *Assessment 5–14*:

What is to be learned?

- Teaching and learning aims should be clear and shared.

Are the pupils motivated to learn?

- Pupils are most likely to be successful when they are confident and enthusiastic about the task.

Are the pupils ready to learn?

- Effective learning should build on previous experience and take account of present abilities and specific needs.

Are learning and teaching effective?

- Tasks, activities and methods of learning and teaching should be designed thoughtfully, with clear purpose.

FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL PUPIL

Learning of any kind is complex and does not follow the same patterns for everybody. This applies particularly to the processes of learning to write and of composing a piece of writing, so it is not possible to propose a set of specific assessment activities which would always be applied in the same way and the same order, and which would always result in the same kinds of useful information. Diagnostic assessment involves judgement by the teacher of what it is most fruitful to pursue with individual pupils. Another important aspect is its value in helping pupils themselves to become more clearly aware of what they have been trying to achieve in a piece of writing, what they could be trying to achieve, and what they might now try to do.

INVOLVING PUPILS

Whenever possible, it is important to involve pupils as active partners in the process. If pupils are encouraged to think reflectively about their own writing, and perhaps other pupils' writing, they will develop a framework within which they can begin to take decisions about their own next steps in writing, independent of the teacher. It is crucial that this approach is set in a constructive and supportive context, where pupils are concerned both for their own learning and the learning of others and where each individual is treated with respect.

Using examples from pupils' own writing can serve as a useful way of illustrating points which might help other pupils to develop aspects of their writing.

FOCUS ON WRITING

Diagnostic assessment in writing is concerned mainly with finding out how the pupil is interpreting and carrying out writing tasks. Some of the evidence will be found in the finished product, but more from observing and discussing with the pupil. It is not possible to isolate pupils' process of writing from the teaching they have received or from the qualities in writing which teaching encourages and which the pupils are trying to achieve. It may nevertheless be helpful to teachers involved in diagnostic assessment to consider these different aspects of writing separately, even though they are inextricably integrated during actual classroom work.

WHEN TO INTERVENE

The teacher's professional judgement is important in deciding when to intervene in the pupil's work. Clearly, a discussion with the teacher is likely to be helpful at certain points, such as the ends of planning, drafting and redrafting sessions. However, it is important to recognise that writing is in essence a solitary activity: the pupil needs time alone to think and draft for himself or herself.

CONDITIONS FOR GOOD WRITING

Good writing flourishes in an atmosphere of general interest in language. Good conditions for the growth of writing abilities exist if:

- pupils read widely, especially for their own enjoyment
- pupils analyse their reading in discussion with the teacher and other pupils
- there are many opportunities to talk, discuss and write at length for a variety of purposes.

Particularly valuable is the kind of interest which is maintained by successful 'conferencing' approaches to writing. Pupils discuss criteria for success and compare their own writing with these criteria, thus developing the habit of self-assessment. They also feel free to consult the teacher or fellow pupils, individuals or groups, whenever they feel it would be helpful. This willingness to discuss and seek help develops when pupils become interested in helping others with their thinking and when they know from previous consultations that talking to someone else about writing can be helpful. The teaching of knowledge about language, grammar, spelling and punctuation is integrated with reading, listening, talking and writing activities.

A GOOD PROCESS OF WRITING

Given such a general classroom atmosphere, any particular writing task benefits further from a now well-established process of writing, which can be described in three stages: preparing for writing, drafting and redrafting, and preparing for publishing.

1 Preparing for writing

Activities to prepare for writing include:

- stimulating the motivation to write
- identifying, or encouraging pupils to identify for themselves, suitable writing aims for the class or group and for individual pupils (based on previous assessment of their writing)
- providing help in finding content, perhaps through use of various resources
- discussing experiences, ideas, etc
- providing help in organising the writing, perhaps by discussion of the best order of events or ideas
- planning by individual pupils.

2 Drafting and redrafting

Drafting of the writing, following the plan or, quite possibly, modifying the plan or re-making it as the writing proceeds; and re-drafting, following one's own and others' evaluation of the writing.

3 Preparing for publishing

Ensuring correctness, appropriate layout, paragraphing, etc.

These three phases interlink in practice. However, when thinking about diagnostic procedures it may be helpful to consider each separately (see chapters 3 and 4).

QUALITIES IN WRITING

Ideally, pupils are thoroughly familiar with the qualities of good writing for particular purposes and can judge for themselves what is appropriate. Teachers can assist this by discussing the qualities of writing regularly with the pupils and offering them frequent opportunities to evaluate their own writing, and that of others, with these qualities in mind.

The following pages set out some of the purposes for writing, some possible tasks and qualities to look for in the three types of writing defined as strands in the *English Language 5–14 Guidelines*:

- personal writing
- functional writing
- imaginative writing.

These qualities can appear in some form in writing by pupils at any stage of development. However, expectations of beginning writers or less advanced ones should be appropriate for their actual stage of progress. Often the emphasis will be on improving one or two of the qualities of the writing using 'growth points' which have been identified in pupils' previous work.

Personal Writing

SOME PURPOSES	SOME POSSIBLE TASKS
To record events, feelings, as a personal record.	Personal log or diary of school work and feelings about it.
To explore/define/give an account of one's knowledge, feelings, attitudes or opinions.	Accounts of personal experience and reactions to it/feelings about it.
	Statements of personal views.
	Poems or drama scripts giving an account of personal experience.
	Newspaper article.

QUALITIES OF PERSONAL WRITING

For all pupils at every stage, improvement is sought in personal involvement, organisation, language and genre, and technical skills.

Personal involvement

- Pupils stating their own ideas, observations, showing personal knowledge of the subject/situation and their own responses, feelings and attitudes.
- Pupils showing personal involvement in the topic – confidence that the communication is worthwhile.

Organisation

- Enough content/ideas to let the reader understand fully the event/experience/topic.
- The organisation of ideas, observations, views, etc, showing connections and/or relationships among them: eg chronological order, significant memories, logic, or even free association of ideas or stream of consciousness.
- Where appropriate, paragraphs or headings are used and there is appropriate layout (for example for a letter).

Language and genre

- Appropriate/original language use: suitable, interesting vocabulary.
- Sentences are complete; there is an appropriate variety of sentence structures, including the use of link words such as 'and', 'but', 'then', 'so', 'because' etc.
- In poems:
  - appropriate use of figurative language
  - use of literary rules or conventions (eg in writing a sonnet or haiku).
- In drama: use of dialogue (realistic, well-observed etc).

Technical skills

- Sentences, breaks, speech marked by suitable punctuation.
- Use of normal grammatical conventions, showing an understanding of relationships such as noun, object, verb, past, present, future, etc.
- Commonly used words are spelt correctly; familiar strategies (learned patterns, word lists, dictionaries) are used to attempt new or uncommon words.

SOME PURPOSES	SOME POSSIBLE TASKS
To make a record of events or information.	Pupils' own notes on various activities in and outside the classroom.
To report or convey events or information.	A report or account of activity or reading.
To summarise or synthesise information.	Set of instructions, charts, diagrams or tables.
To evaluate information/ideas/evidence.	Poster or wall display of information.
To persuade someone to a point of view or action.	Newspaper article.
	Letter (of request for information).
	Summaries of read/heard material.
	Advertisements.
	Any of the above may also include an evaluative element (for example book review, account of experiment with conclusion).

QUALITIES OF FUNCTIONAL WRITING

For all pupils, at every stage, improvement is sought in recording, reporting and evaluation.

Recording

Content and organisation

- Key information and relevant detail included.
- The writing keeps to the point; no irrelevant information.
- Sections of the writing and the sequence of the information show a logic; they indicate understanding of the events, ideas, information, and how they relate to one another.

Language

- Vocabulary shows understanding of/familiarity with the topic.
- The record may be in note form or in sentences.

Reporting/summarising/synthesising information/giving instructions

Content and organisation

As for Recording and

- Suitable layout and format are used (for example involving title, headings, diagram, illustration, varying size of print); recognised conventions are used (for example for letters, science reports).
- The writing concludes or rounds off suitably.

Language

As for Recording and

- A suitable style and tone are used (for example personal/impersonal, informal/formal, simple and direct/elaborate) depending on the intended reader.
- Sentences are complete; there is an appropriate variety of sentence structures (many of which may be simple to meet reporting purposes); there is appropriate use of various link words (and, but, so, because, since, etc).

Evaluation and persuasion

Content and organisation

As for Recording and Summarising and

- There is clear statement of the writer's own view or position.
- There is evidence to support this view or position (facts, reasoning, illustration, quotation).
- Account is taken of other views/positions.

Language

As for Recording and Summarising above, and

- Appropriate persuasive language is used.

Imaginative Writing

SOME PURPOSES	*SOME POSSIBLE TASKS*
To entertain, give pleasure.	Stories.
To explore, interpret, reflect experience.	Drama (scripts, preferably arising from improvisation and practical activity).
	Poems.

QUALITIES OF IMAGINATIVE WRITING

For all pupils, at every stage, improvement is sought in originality of content, sequence of action, character, setting, and language and genre (the features of narrative). Some of the qualities below also apply to poems. Additional points appropriate to poetry are to be found under Personal Writing.

Originality of content

- Originality of ideas, perceptions, inventions; use of experience or of reading; sense of writer's personality in the writing.

Sequence of actions

- At the simplest, an unsophisticated chronological order (and then .. and then ...).
- Ordering of events or observations by logic, suspense, or some other pattern. Characters or events cause effects – on the characters themselves, on other characters, on other events, etc.
- Selective and meaningful use of events, characters, detail, setting – not just 'everything that happened'.

Character(s)

- Description of the character(s).
- Presentation of the viewpoints, motivation and behaviour of characters with various attitudes.
- Appropriate dramatisation, instead of simple description (ie characters who act and thus reveal themselves).
- Indication of relationships between characters and of effects of events on characters; perhaps changes in characters' attitudes and behaviour; where appropriate, conflict between characters.

Setting

- Contextualisation of events and characters, the creation of a 'world' for them to exist in. Includes physical setting and time of the story, the history of any earlier relevant events.

Language and genre

- Use of story conventions and techniques (for example of crime story, of fantasy story, of romantic story).
- Use of dialogue (original, realistic or well-observed).
- Suitable, interesting vocabulary. Appropriate/original language use.
- Use of techniques (eg simile, metaphor, alliteration) to convey feelings or ideas.
- Particular emphasis on use of dialogue and presentation of characters' viewpoints, attitudes, conflicts.
- Use of normal grammatical conventions, showing an understanding of relationships such as noun, object, verb, past, present, future, etc.
- Commonly used words spelt correctly. Familiar strategies (learned patterns, word lists, dictionaries) used to attempt new or uncommon words.

3 Diagnostic procedures in writing

This section is concerned with the strategies for taking a closer look at pupils' writing in order explore pupils' progress and help pupils' learning.

AN OUTLINE OF DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES APPLIED TO WRITING

This is an outline of an 'ideal' process which may be undertaken with individual pupils, or groups of pupils. It is not intended that the teacher and pupils work through all the stages every time a piece of writing is being produced, but the aim should be to ensure that pupils assimilate these stages into their normal approach to writing.

TEACHER ACTIVITY

Planning

- Ensure an understanding of the **qualities** of the type of writing being looked at
- **Define a meaningful task.** What is going to be done? How does it link with previous work?

↓

Teaching

- **Introduce** the topic and the task, or encourage pupils to find their own topic and purpose. Prepare and motivate pupils:
  - do they have something to write *about*?
  - do they understand the nature of the task?
- **Observe** pupils
- **Read** and **discuss** pupils' writing – focus comment on the qualities of writing considered at the start of exercise; encourage pupils to assess their own writing in relation to these
- **Assess** and **diagnose**. Discuss with pupils and encourage revision.

↓

Moving on

- **Identify qualities** of writing in pupils' work, 'growth points' and aspects requiring further work
- **Record** (if appropriate)
- Help pupils to overcome weaknesses and so make progress
- **Prepare follow up.**

PUPIL ACTIVITY

Preparing for writing

- Initial stimulus to writing. **Explore** the topic and the task (possible methods for this include reading, discussion with the teacher, conferencing, brainstorming etc)
- **Plan** – make notes, gather ideas etc.

↓

Drafting and redrafting

- **Write** first draft
- **Revise** and **redraft** composition (ie reorder, add/delete, change meaning– the 'composition skills') – perhaps in consultation with the teacher, peer group, or another pupil.

↓

Preparing to publish

- **Edit** grammar, spelling etc – the formal or 'transcription' skills
- Drafting, redrafting and editing need not be regarded as occurring strictly separately or in the sequence given
- **Produce** final fair copy
- **Proof-read** and **publish**.

OBTAINING EVIDENCE

Three straightforward teaching activities are the principal means by which assessment evidence is obtained:

- *Observing* – watching pupils preparing, planning, drafting, re-planning and redrafting.
- *Reading* – considering carefully what the pupils have written.
- *Questioning* – interacting with the pupils, discussing with them, and listening to them to find out what they are trying to achieve at different points in the writing process.

There are no 'diagnostic tests' of writing which will provide better evidence. The familiarity of these procedures should not mask the fact that what one is obtaining evidence about can range widely: it might, for instance include the extent to which various qualities are present in the writing; aspects of the pupil's 'psychology', such as motivation, confidence and previous experience; and the pupil's understanding of and ability to deal with the task as the teacher presented it.

FOCUSING ON GROWTH POINTS

The particular focus of observation, questioning and discussion will depend on the purpose of the writing, the task and what the teacher knows about the pupil.

What is important is that there should be a limited focus – a concentration on one aspect, or a small number of aspects, which the pupil can manage to think about, develop or improve. It is helpful for the teacher to identify one or two 'growth points' which are most significant for the pupil – something the pupil is already showing understanding or awareness of, or something readily related to his or her thinking about the task.

One effective way of focusing on something the pupil can deal with is to observe, read and discuss with three questions in mind:

- what is being done successfully? (give praise for this)
- what is being attempted, perhaps without full success? (give praise for this, too; and recognise it as a growth point, something which the pupil can be helped to develop or improve)
- what else is needed? (this may be something necessary to achieve the purpose of the task, but which the pupil shows no awareness of; or, perhaps, some particular point of spelling, grammar or punctuation which could be taught; or it may be best to work at present only on the growth points identified).

ACTING ON EVIDENCE

Once the 'close look' has suggested growth points, the teacher can help the pupil to move on by identifying the most helpful next steps, either in continuing work on the current task or in the next task.

4 Areas for exploration

The final section of this guide takes each phase of the writing process and offers possible areas for exploration in the form of questions to be considered. These questions are not intended to be a rigid sequential checklist: they are intended to be used flexibly to help the teacher to identify action and next steps for individual pupils.

The three phases of the writing process have been subdivided as follows:

1 Preparing for writing (pages 12 to 13)

- purposes and qualities
- task
- particular aims
- planning

2 Drafting and redrafting (pages 14 to 15)

- conditions for good writing
- using the plan
- thinking about qualities and focus
- redrafting

3 Preparing to publish (pages 16 to 18)

- sentences and paragraphs
- spelling
- presentation
- handwriting

This booklet is an attempt to bring together features of existing good practice – much of what it contains should reassure teachers about what they already do rather than reveal anything new or radical.

The aim has been to present a framework within which writing can be taught. It is *not* intended that teachers do everything that is presented within this framework with every pupil and for every piece of writing. The process outlined is an ideal and many factors will affect the way the teachers translate it into practice. However we hope that while teachers will concentrate on particular aspects of the process at any one time, it will prove useful to have in mind the larger structure into which individual aspects fit.

Preparing for Writing

Which of the following questions do you think it is important to consider?

- *Does the pupil have a clear idea of the purpose of the writing and the qualities expected?*
- *Does the task offer the pupil real opportunities to demonstrate her/his ability to write?*
- *Is the pupil aware of particular aims for her/him in this piece of writing?*
- *Does the pupil plan effectively before undertaking the writing task?*

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION	*POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS*
Purposes and qualities	
Does the pupil have a clear idea of the purpose of the writing?	• Ask why a particular kind of writing might be undertaken. • Offer a range of possible purposes for writing and ask pupils to think of and discuss various specific writing tasks they could do to achieve these purposes. • Give a list of types of writing task to be undertaken in class over the next month or so; ask pupils to think about and discuss the purposes of these particular tasks.
Does the pupil have a clear idea of the qualities of that type of writing? Opportunities such as these, which encourage sharing ideas on qualities, will help pupils to develop their own criteria against which they can begin to assess their own writing.	• Encourage pupils to keep a record of their own writing, noting beside each piece its purpose. • Offer models of 'good' writing and provide opportunities to discuss the qualities in it. • Give pupils a choice of two pieces of writing and ask them to say which is better and why. • Offer three pieces of writing and ask pupils to link two of them which have similar qualities, giving reasons for their choice. • Ask pupils to think about the particular kind of writing to be done and to discuss ideas about what would make it effective (eg what makes a good ghost story?)
Task	
Does the task offer the pupil real opportunities to demonstrate/develop her/his ability to write?	• Ensure that the pupil is aware of how the task fits into the wider classroom context. • Talk with pupils, making the link between the task and previous work explicit or asking them to think about the task and identify the link. • Consider the task against the purposes and qualities of writing it demands. Do pupils have the necessary skills/understanding/experience? • Offer a stimulus which relates to pupils' interests (reading extract, photo, TV programme etc) to encourage new ideas. • Invite the pupil to consider the purpose of the activity and to create her/his own task. • Introduce something new as a stimulus to interest pupils (eg outside trip, visitor, picture, video, discussion, advice on structure). • Offer a range of stimuli and encourage the pupil to select the one which they would most enjoy. • Invite the pupils to identify what they are trying to do in a particular piece of writing; and then to decide how well they have achieved these aims when the writing is completed.

Preparing for Writing

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION	POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS
Particular aims	
Do the pupils have a clear idea of their particular aims for this piece of writing?	• Ask the pupils to describe to you what they intend to achieve in this piece of writing. • Have small groups of pupils with shared aims, to allow them to support one another. • Ensure that writing aims are suitably limited in number. • Ask them to note the two or three things they intend to concentrate on. • Encourage pupils to identify for themselves the qualities they are trying to achieve. • Clearly identify for pupils the key things you hope they will achieve. • Ask the pupils (in groups, pairs) to discuss whether a particular piece of writing achieves its aims; and how it could be improved or achieve them better or more fully.
Planning	
Have the pupils had adequate opportunities to think about and/or discuss the task? Have they had the opportunity to note down important ideas and organise them into a plan?	• Try techniques to help develop ideas, eg brainstorming, conferencing, quiet reflection, providing a related task (eg selecting words around a theme from a word bank). • Talk with pupils about what they intend to write or provide opportunities for them to talk with one another.
Do the pupils' plans offer interesting insights? Are they likely to provide a sound basis for writing?	• Offer pupils a plan for a story and ask them to decide whether or not it is a helpful plan and what they would change to improve it. Remind them of the qualities looked for in a good story. • Discuss one part of the plan and work with the pupil(s) to develop a clearer focus on what matters, eg a key episode or character.

Notes

Drafting and Redrafting

Which of the following areas does your evidence suggest is the most important to address?

- *Is the classroom atmosphere conducive to writing?*
- *Is the pupil actually using the plan to help structure the writing task?*
- *Is the pupil succeeding in producing the qualities expected in this type of writing?*
- *Does the pupil understand the value of redrafting the text?*

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION	*POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS*
Conditions for good writing	
Is there a quiet atmosphere for pupils to think as they write?	• Create a 'quiet corner' for writers either within the classroom or the school, where conditions for working there are agreed with pupils.
Are pupils aware of how to seek support either from teachers or from other pupils?	• 'Publicise' your availability and that of other pupils for 'conferencing'. • Have 'help cards' available, giving advice on various aspects of writing.
Are pupils aware of who will read their writing and what might happen to it (for example folder, wall display, external audience)?	• Remind pupils that the 'publication' of their work is an important aim, and offer various outlets and audiences.
Using the plan	
Are pupils actually using the plan, however flexibly, to help structure their writing?	• Work with the pupils to demonstrate how part of the plan might translate into part of the writing. • Where appropriate, encourage pupils to look back over the plan to modify its structure or content.
Thinking about qualities and focus	
Are pupils actively engaged in the task and succeeding in producing the qualities expected in this type of writing?	• Discuss further ideas or additional stimuli on how existing ideas might be developed. • Ask the pupils to describe the central purpose of the writing, eg to entertain or inform the reader. • Remind (or ask) the pupils to indicate the particular qualities to focus on in this piece of writing. • Encourage the pupils to discuss the words they have chosen. Do they create the intended effect? • Discuss with pupils how sentence structure can be used to create particular effects, eg using short sentences to build tension or to inform readers clearly.

Drafting and Redrafting

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION	POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS
Redrafting	
Are there opportunities for pupils to redraft?	• Either during the task or after the task, provide opportunities for pupils to consider their writing against the qualities and their own personal aims; and encourage them to identify and act on next steps.
Do pupils know what redrafting involves?	• Highlight for pupils that redrafting is concerned with improving the quality of the writing and not simply self correction. Ensure that pupils have practical and realistic 'next steps'.
Are pupils able to think about their own writing and to identify areas for redrafting?	• Invite the pupils to identify one area for development, for example making the end of the story more exciting, describing a character in greater detail, making a point more clearly. • Concentrate on strategies to improve that quality, for example discussing ideas with other pupils. • Ask pupils to draw the characters in their writing and identify further necessary information.
Do pupils see the need to read over a completed draft?	• Ask pupils in pairs or small groups to reflect on one another's writing and to work supportively together to identify strengths and areas for development. • Identify particular sections and ask pupils to read them aloud; or read sections to the pupils and ask if this is what they meant.
Do pupils read over sections of text which do not make sense?	• Encourage meaning by providing a real audience for the work, for example another pupil, another class, a class magazine, parent, other teacher.

Notes

Preparing to Publish

Which of the following areas does your evidence suggest is the most important to address?

- *Is the pupil able to write using sentences and paragraphs effectively?*
- *Is the pupil able to write with correct spelling?*
- *Does the pupil present written work effectively?*

The questions below relate to the formal skills of writing. These are listed as three separate strands in the *English Language 5–14 Guidelines*: punctuation and structure, spelling, handwriting and presentation. Pupils need to use many of these skills in 'preparing to publish'.

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION	*POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS*
Sentences	
In speech most children naturally use sentences, phrases and individual words to convey meaning with great sophistication. The task is therefore to adapt the knowledge they already have of the spoken word to the written word.	
Do the pupils miss out full stops, often or occasionally?	• Read the text back to the pupils as marked and discuss with them if this is the way they would like the text to be. • Ask the pupils to read their text aloud and note natural stops. Encourage a physical action (banging hand on desk?) to mark stops.
Do they use commas instead of full stops?	• Using a correction code, ask pupils to find a missing full stop in one line of their writing – then errors in several lines; then on a page. • Praise recognition that a stop is needed. By direct teaching and/or use of 'help cards', demonstrate (several examples) when a full stop is needed; and how commas are used, for example for parenthesis, list, to separate the main idea in the sentence from other ideas supporting or telling us more about the main idea. These other ideas are often introduced by link words like 'when', 'if', 'because', 'although', 'instead of' etc. Use such words in examples and point them out. Ask the pupils to check their own text for 'full stop' stops and 'commas for ideas linked to main idea'. • Demonstrate (possibly with 'help cards') various types of simple sentence and of sentences with subordinate clauses introduced by various link words as above. Explain that a sentence usually has one main idea, possibly with others supporting or telling us more about the main idea. Invite the pupils to distinguish between genuine sentences and cases where two sentences are run together without punctuation or separated by a comma. • Where appropriate, demonstrate use of semicolons and colons to mark sections of sentences in which two main ideas are set next to each other (colon shows that next section expands or explains preceding idea; semicolon shows that another main idea follows which is closely connected to the preceding one).
Do the pupils know how to use sentence structures to create particular effects?	• Discuss with the pupils the structure of sentences and the need for 'joining words' or structures to link ideas; offer various joining words. Invite the pupils to create sentences using them. • Offer extracts of text and ask pupils to discuss how the writer has used, for example, sentence length, structure, and punctuation to create atmosphere.

Preparing to Publish

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION	POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS
Paragraphs	
Does the pupil, having structured her/his writing suitably, fail to mark the structure with paragraphs?	• Ask pupils in pairs or groups to mark and discuss reasons for paragraph breaks in various pieces of unparagraphed text, including some of their own writing. It may be helpful to say in advance, for example, how many sections each passage might fall into, or what the main ideas are.
Spelling	
Are the pupils confident about their ability to learn to spell?	• Praise pupils for words written correctly. Perhaps count the number to emphasise success.
Do they recognise mistakes?	• Note in the margin one or two mistakes on a single line and ask the pupil to find them. This can be extended to finding a number of words from 2 to 3 lines, then from a paragraph, then a page.
Are there patterns of errors?	• Highlight for the pupil the recurring pattern and if appropriate teach a rule or devise a memory aid. • Ask the pupil to learn problem words or patterns (using one of the strategies mentioned below) and check learning and retention.
Do pupils have appropriate strategies for learning new words?	• Identify pupils' remembering styles. For those with a stronger visual memory, a look-remember approach may be helpful; for those with a stronger auditory memory, saying letters over may be useful. If neither is dominant it might be helpful to reinforce either approach by asking some pupils to trace words with their fingers. To find out about pupils' memory style ask them to think about someone: do they first see a face or hear a voice?
Do pupils have a strategy to help them remember words on a longer term basis?	• Encourage pupils to learn a small number of words from their own writing, perhaps using an approach such as 'look – cover – write – check', amending the word in their own writing and then adding the word to their own 'word bank'.
Presentation	
Are pupils aware of the purpose and impact of layout on readers?	• Emphasise the potential or real readership for a piece of writing and the need for 'publishing skills' to make the text attractive. • Look at examples of text from newspapers or books and ask pupils to choose which they prefer and why, or why the writer might have chosen to present the text and/or drawings in this way.
Do pupils have a framework to analyse their work? Do they take into account such features as use of visuals; layout of text; use of headings and sub-headings; use of white space?	• Provide opportunities to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the ways in which various pieces of text are presented. • Encourage the use of a word-processor to allow for experiments with the presentation of the text.

Preparing to Publish

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION	POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS
Handwriting *Is there need to develop pupils' handwriting skills?*	• Encourage pupils to describe what 'good' handwriting looks like, perhaps prompting them using questions (for example would all the letters go in the same direction or different directions?) • Once pupils have identified a set of criteria for 'good' handwriting by looking at various examples, ask them to think about their own writing and identify one or two 'next steps' which they can try to improve its appearance. • Offer a framework for analysing the pupils' writing, for example: – do letters slope in the same direction? – is there a mixture of capitals and small letters where all should be small? – are small letters all the same size? – are capitals all the same size? – are all letters completed? – are letters written on or between the lines? – is there a 'flow', are letters linked? • Provide lined paper if use of unlined is causing a problem. • Ask pupils to trace over writing which they agree is good. • Guide the pupil's hand to help establish an appropriate rhythm of writing – tracing over writing or practising it to encourage a flowing movement (if necessary, first encouraging flowing movement without actual letter formation).

Notes

Taking a Closer Look at

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Helping teachers to teach and pupils to learn is the key objective of the diagnostic procedures series. The sets of materials, for English language, Mathematics and Science, draw on existing research and practice and apply it in the context of curriculum and assessment for Education 5–14. The authors offer guidance on diagnostic and developmental techniques, illustrated by examples from the classroom, which will help teachers to assess pupils' understanding and progress and identify appropriate next steps to help pupils make progress.

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